

William Bulkley House
824 Harbor Road
Southport
Fairfield County
Connecticut

HABS No. CONN-309

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. CONN-309

WILLIAM BULKLEY HOUSE

Location: 824 Harbor Road (west side of road), Southport,
Fairfield County Connecticut

USGS Westport Quadrangle Map; Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 18.643890.4554470

Present Owner
and Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Frank D. Wendt

Present Use: Residence

Statement of
Significance: The William Bulkley house was built circa 1767-70 and
is one of the few pre-Revolution houses in Southport.
In 1799, during the Revolutionary War, Fairfield and
vicinity were burned and ravaged by Tory Loyalists.
Only eleven houses throughout the region survived the
burning; one of four in Southport was the Bulkley res-
idence. Some of the original handhewn exterior shakes
and the nails with which they were fastened exist on
sides of the two-and-a-half story frame structure.
The fan-lights ornamenting the gable pediments and the
frieze with five-shank triglyphs spaced at regular in-
tervals are details characteristic of late eighteenth
century Connecticut architecture. Members of the
Bulkley family were original land-owners in Fairfield,
and the name has remained prominent in Southport's
history since the 1660s.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1767-70.
2. Original and subsequent owners: References to the chain of
title to the land upon which the structure stands are in
the Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Fairfield Town Hall,
Fairfield.

1754 Deed, recorded September 17, 1754 in Volume 2, page 20.
Proprietors of Common Land in Fairfield to Peter
Bulkley.

1767 Deed, recorded September 25, 1767 in Volume 17, page
215-216. Peter Bulkley, Jr. to William Bulkley.

- 1809 Deed, recorded October 4, 1809 in Volume 33, page 98.
Estate of William Bulkley to David Banks.
- 1816 Deed, recorded November 1816 in Volume 35, page 397.
David S. Banks to Joshua Jennings, III.
- 1832 Deed, recorded October 23, 1832 in Volume 43, page
446. Joshua Jennings to Wakeman Meeker.
- 1881 Deed, recorded January 22, 1881 in Volume 61, page
772-73. W. B. Meeker & Son's Estate to Simon C.
Sherwood.
- 1906 Deed, recorded March 20, 1906 in Volume 72, page 559.
Simon Sherwood to John H. Perry.
- 1906 Deed, recorded March 20, 1906 in Volume 72, page 560.
John H. Perry to Matilda M. Sherwood (wife of Simon).
- 1915 Deed, recorded November 20, 1915 in Volume 87, page
475. Estate of Matilda M. Sherwood to Mary Lambertson.
- 1962 Deed, recorded September 25, 1962 in Volume 442 page
602. Mary Lambertson Row Estate to Elizabeth
Lambertson Pratt.
- 1963 Deed, recorded December 16, 1963 in Volume 461, page
196. Elizabeth Lambertson Pratt to Dorothy K. Converse.
- 1965 Deed, recorded September 13, 1965 in Volume 489, page
336. Dorothy D. Converse to Frank D. Wendt.
3. Original plan and construction: The house was originally rectangular and measured 35' (four-bay front) x 25'. It is two-and-a-half stories with attic and built of mortise-and-tenon frame construction upon a granite foundation. The sides were originally covered with handhewn wooden shakes and fastened with handwrought nails. The gable roof with an east-west running ridge is covered with wooden shingles. A large brick chimney is centered upon the ridge. The roof gable and second-story eave are trimmed with a simple molded cornice and fascia board which is ornamented with regularly spaced five-shank triglyphs. The off-center front (south-east) entry has a simple molding framing the door. All first-story windows are twelve-over-twelve light double-hung sash with raised wooden sills and lintels. Second-story windows

are nine-over-twelve light. Semi-ovate fanlights ornament each gable pediment. A tripartite Palladian window has been added to the base of the fanlight on the southwest gable. The house faces southeast on a site which slopes north from Mill River Harbor.

4. Alterations and additions: Shutters were added to all windows and original twelve-over-twelve windows were replaced with two-over-two light windows. A one-story porch with gable facing front was added over the entry doorway sometime during the nineteenth century. A large enclosed porch with shed roof was added to the southwest elevation and a one-room section with a shed roof was added to the northeast elevation. The present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Wendt, restored the house under the direction of Robert I. Carter, an Essex, Massachusetts architect. In an attempt to restore the residence to its original appearance, several changes resulted: on the exterior, shutters were removed, twelve-over-twelve light windows on the first story and nine-over-twelve light second-story windows like the originals replaced the two-over-two pane windows; the front porch over the doorway was removed; and the chimney was rebuilt. On the interior random width boards were added on the first floor, Victorian mantels and doors were removed, and second-floor baths were modernized.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Structure:

On July 7, 1779, Fairfield was attacked by Tory Loyalists who set about to burn the town completely. With the exception of eleven buildings - four of which were in Southport - Fairfield was destroyed. One of the few residences to survive the burning was William Bulkley's house, located on land across from the harbor. William Bulkley was an original and prosperous landowner in Southport (then Mill River) during the late 1600s. In addition to his property holdings, he owned a mercantile store opposite his residence on Harbor Road.

In 1832, Wakeman B. Meeker, a prosperous shipping merchant, acquired the old Bulkley residence, the plot of land directly to the north of the house, and property fronting the harbor. The Meeker family lived in the colonial frame house, and together with Simon Sherwood, Wakeman Meeker built a wharf and three warehouses across from his residence. The mercantile shipping firm of Meeker & Sherwood was organized in the 1830s. They owned three schooners and seven sloops for freight and passenger service. The firm dissolved around mid-century and was reorganized as W. B. Meeker & Son's.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: None.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Fairfield County Deed Records, Fairfield Town Hall,
Fairfield, Connecticut.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Fairfield Historic District Commission. Final Report:
Establishment of Historic Districts in Greenfield
Hill and Southport. Fairfield, 1966.

Hurd, D. Hamilton, compiler. History of Fairfield
County Connecticut. Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis
& Co., 1881.

Perry, John H. The Southport Harbor. Fairfield:
Fairfield Historical Society, 1921.

Prepared by John G. Waite and
David T. VanZanten
Team Architects
Historic American
Buildings Survey
September 1966

Jan E. Cigliano
Staff Historian
Historic American
Buildings Survey
December 1978

PART II. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Southport Historic District Commission, several members of whom provided the necessary funds. The project was completed in the summer of 1966 under the general direction of James C. Massey, then the Chief of HABS; Ralph Schwarz of the Ford Foundation; and Architect John C. Waite (Columbia University); with assistant architects Christopher

Benninger (Harvard University), Richard Haines (University of Kentucky), and Andrew Craig Morrison (University of Michigan), and architectural historian David T. VanZanten (Harvard University), at the HABS Field Office in Southport, Connecticut. The data was prepared and edited in HABS Washington office in December 1978 by Jan E. Cigliano, staff historian. Photographs were taken by HABS staff photographer Jack E. Boucher in September 1966.